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XXVII.



# AUTHORITY

✓ BY

T. B. STRONG, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF RIPON

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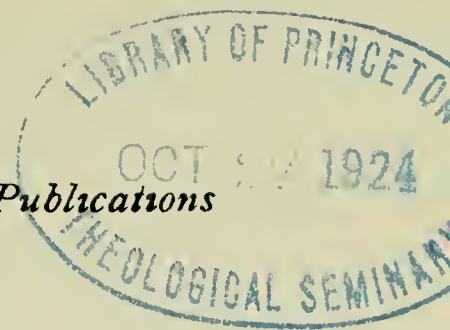
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## AUTHORITY

**T**HERE is probably no word which covers wider and more difficult ground than the word Authority. In a way, every one knows what it means. In our daily life we are constantly in presence of authority of many kinds. The policeman has authority to regulate the traffic. The umpire in a cricket-match has authority to answer the mysterious question, "How's that?" The magistrate has authority to commit to prison. All these cases, and endless others might be produced, run back upon the social instinct in man: It is because man is, as Aristotle said, φύσει πολιτικὸν ζῶον, that he yields his will to the policeman, the umpire, and the magistrate. If he generally refused to do so, social life would be at an end.

Let us now consider one or two rather different situations. Let us suppose that some one comes to see me and states, with great conviction, that the interior angles of any triangle are equal to two right angles. I make a suitable reply, but ask how he knows. He answers "If you will grant me certain premises, and a method of deductive proof, I can put you in such a position that you will be unable to deny my statement. The thing will be *proved*." Now suppose that I arrive at one of the great stations in Liverpool, and ask my way to the Cathedral, say, of a porter or ticket-collector. He will tell me politely which way to go. Suppose, then, I say, "Can you *prove*

to me that this is the right way ? ” The man will be perplexed, perhaps angry. He will say, “ Prove it ? Of course I can’t. Everyone knows that is the way, and if you follow it you will get there. ” Now suppose I say to him : “ Will you pardon my asking the question : are you a generally truthful person, or a habitual liar ? ” He will probably be filled with blind rage, as Englishmen are apt to be when puzzled, and will fail to see that it is really the right question to ask. If I do not know the way, and he cannot demonstrate the truth of what he tells me, I depend upon his character and good will.

I have chosen trivial illustrations of the working of the principle of authority, because I want to make plain how very deeply the whole matter is concerned with our ordinary experience. Of the cases above one set depends upon the normal constitution of humanity. Another case depends upon the normal confidence which we have in our fellow-men. In the other, confidence in our fellowship gives way to confidence in our intellectual processes, and the authoritative element in the position disappears : the logical demonstration supersedes the trust in the other man. Perhaps then we may say generally that the principle of authority prevails wherever the human or contingent element enters. Methods of abstract reasoning, such as the mathematician uses, or the formal logician, are generally the same in all circumstances and for all persons.<sup>1</sup> If their conclusions are stated in authoritative style, this is not the true reason for their acceptance ;

(1) This is not quite true : it is tacitly assumed that the premises of logic and arithmetic as such are true of the ordinary world.

when their real nature is discovered, they bind in virtue of their inherent force.

The illustrations just given lead to a further remark. It is clear that the principle of authority is of the utmost value in education. If each age had to begin at the absolute beginning no progress would ever be possible. It is made possible by making the gains of one age available for the next. These are usually communicated authoritatively : the pupil is encouraged to learn not only the bare statements but the reason for them, and he can then use the achievements of his predecessors as the starting-point of his own developments. It is true that some modern educationists practice what is called the heuristic method, and encourage the child to repeat in his own experience the steps of the past growth of thought. There is value in this method, but, I think, not nearly so much as is sometime supposed. It would be mere waste of time if the fumbblings of the pupil were not guided towards their proper result.<sup>1</sup> It is indeed difficult to see how authoritative teaching can be avoided in early stages. But in ordinary education the aim of authority is always to supersede itself, and enable people to realize the inherent value of what they have at first learnt under authority.

The use of the principle of authority in education introduces a further point. It aims, as I have just said, at saving time and trouble. It communicates conclusions reached by others for certain definite reasons, and is only temporary in its operation. Sooner or later the con-

(1) See some admirable remarks in the Romanes Lecture this year, by Professor Burnet of S. Andrews, pp. 10 foll.

clusions are seen to rest upon an unassailable basis of their own, and not merely upon the word or the command of the authoritative person. It is on this point, we may say, that all the casuistry of the question depends. There would be no difficulty in life if we could separate absolutely the sphere of authority and reason. If, for instance, the scientific mind dealt with a fixed area of knowledge, and appealed only to reason and the necessity of human thought ; and if, let us say, all religious ideas belonged to the department of authority pure and simple, we should never have any serious mental conflicts. Then, if we wanted to know about religious truth, we should go to the religious expert ; he would deliver judgment without assigning any reasons, and we should conceive ourselves bound by them. If, on the other hand, we wanted to know about the physical order, we should go to our man of science : if he were in a hurry he would give us a definite decision, which we could accept, but he would prefer to set out his decision with all the reasonings belonging to it. But a situation so simple as this hardly ever, if ever, occurs. The policeman, the umpire, the magistrate give decisions and claim obedience, but there is a system behind them upon which they depend. It is not the same sort of system as that upon which a teacher of mathematics depends : the decisions deal with contingent matter, *i.e.*; matter which might take various forms. The laws of the country, or of a particular game might have been different, and may be changed, and then the decisions based upon them will be different. But there will always be a system of some sort behind them, and a rational process by which the decisions are derived from the system.



I have endeavoured in these preliminary remarks to indicate the general character of the problems raised by the idea of authority. We must now approach the subject more precisely, and I propose to discuss it as it appears in the three main spheres of human interest,—knowledge, morality, and religion. In actual experience, of course, these three are not mutually exclusive, but they represent different ways of approaching the world and have, in some sense, different ideals, and we may fairly, therefore, consider them separately.

### I.

The object of knowledge is to obtain control over the ordinary facts or events in what we call the outer world, and in our own inner life, treated objectively. You must forgive me if I use for brevity's sake, common language without criticizing its implications and validity. From this point of view, we conceive ourselves as spectators of a changing world, part of which, as we say lies outside us, and part within. The elephant in the Zoological Gardens belongs to the outer world—at this moment to a remote part of it. My tooth-ache belongs to the inner world. We generally assume that the elephant belongs not only to *my* outer world, but to yours, and that of every person provided with the ordinary senses and intelligence. But my tooth-ache, though I can explain to others that I have got it, is my own, a possession of which I cannot be deprived, and which I cannot share with others. This, or something like this, is the way in which we conceive our daily experience: it will not, of course, bear criticism, but for our present purpose this

does not matter. The world to which these experiences belong is full of facts, as we call them,—of things and events which crowd in upon us in an incessant stream. Obviously we can do nothing with such a stream, unless we can contrive to introduce *order* into it ; unless we can hit upon the uniform rules which prevail in it, so that we can know to some extent what to expect from the outer world, and how to bend it to our will. This is the province of knowledge, a process which, when it reaches its highest levels of ideal and achievement, we dignify with a Latin name—science. The efforts of the last century or so have shown us in a most impressive way how vast a power we exercise under this head. Not only can the human mind rise to larger and larger generalizations, and bring more and more of what we call facts under their range, but it acquires increasing reason for belief that its movements are in the right direction, as they are increasingly verified in practical experience. The engineer who gets the Forth Bridge to stand up in its place has reason to think that the principles and calculations upon which he designed it are true of the world, as well as self-consistent in thought ; so too the bacteriologist who by acting on the results of his investigations puts an end to the danger of yellow fever is in a similar position. No sane man can, I think, doubt that the students of natural science have gained possession of principles which go far towards fulfilling the ideal of knowledge, *i.e.*, to bring the confused matter of experience under the control of laws which enable us to understand what happens, and in certain directions to predict the future.

Now the men of science build up by their efforts a vast system of knowledge, which gives the human race increasing mastery over the world. For the majority of men this system is accepted on their authority, and acted upon without question. I use the telephone. I do not understand the scientific side of it, and it would never occur to me to raise any question upon the theoretic principles of sound-transmission by electricity. If my telephone goes wrong, I attribute it to the lack of intelligence or malignity of the Post Office. But if I were definitely challenged as to my acceptance of the whole system it might not occur to me to mention the inventor of the telephone ; I should probably say I trusted *science* ; in other words, to the reason of the thing. Natural science, at the present time, exercises as wide and coercive an authority in its own region as has ever been exercised in the history of the world : its subjects ask fewer questions and raise fewer objections than any others. But that is because they think that any questions they did raise could almost certainly be conclusively answered. Its authority rests in the end on reason, that is, on the belief that the human mind has real power to interpret the world.

Before leaving this part of the subject, I wish to say a few words about one region of experience which remains recalcitrant to the generalizing method of natural science—I mean the region of historic fact. Historic facts have an individuality about them which makes them very awkward to deal with in general terms. Let me try to show what I mean by one or two simple illustrations. On

15th March, B.C. 44, Julius Caesar was murdered in Rome by stabbing. On 24th June, A.D. 1923, the present Bishop of Ripon preached in the School Chapel at Repton. Neither of these statements can ever be demonstratively proved ; that is, neither of them can be shown to depend upon any system of rules or principles. An astronomer can tell you what eclipses of sun and moon there will be in 1950, or did occur in any year in which the solar system was operating. His statement merely puts in a historic form the permanent fact that certain bodies are moving in certain lines at a certain pace. The scientific mind has always longed to bring historic events under the rule of some universal law, but so far without success. For historic events, such as those quoted—and it does not matter whether they are important or trivial, remote or recent,—we depend upon the witness, that is the authority; of those who were present on the occasion. All sorts of generalizations can be made about such events, great and small ; we may have reason to think them antecedently probable ; but the fact that they occurred as described at a particular place and time depends on the relation and the authority of those who were there.

## II.

I now come to consider the question of authority in the moral world. The first point which comes prominently into view is the striking difference which exists between facts for the student of natural science and facts for the moralist. Shortly stated, the difference is this : For the natural scientist the facts of the world are just the events that have happened ; he is interested in tracing

their connexions, and forming them into a system, but he does not, as a scientist, want to make them other than they are. But the moralist frequently does want to make them other than they are. He is concerned not merely with what is, but with what ought to be. His system is not disinterred, as it were, from a mass of confused events, but is an ideal which has not been, and may never be fully realized. This difference between the world of natural science and that of ethics has very far-reaching effects. As the moralist is dealing with a system of moral ideas which is not yet realized, that is, with a world of which the facts are not yet finally determined, his conception of truth is of a peculiar kind. If a man goes to a scientific expert, and says he has reached the conclusion that the earth is flat, the expert will say, "That is nonsense. It is incompatible with the whole system of ideas upon which our knowledge of the world is based." It is of no use to tell the scientist that he is conscientiously convinced of the flatness of the earth: the inevitable answer is, "Your conscientious conviction is of no importance in the matter: the fact that you have reached this conclusion means, either that you are totally incompetent to understand the points at issue, or that you have neglected relevant considerations." But this cannot be said in quite the same way about moral principles. Let us consider a series of propositions which will illustrate this. It is morally wrong to commit murder. It is morally wrong to gamble. It is morally wrong to consume alcoholic drink in any form. It is morally wrong to go to war. The human conscience is an infallible guide. Of these five propositions, all modern Englishmen would,

probably, agree upon the first. The next three would cause acute difference of opinion. The last would probably be accepted by the majority rather uncritically. But in certain countries, at the present moment, assassination for political purposes would be regarded as a venial offence ; and though we in England are accustomed to give an infallible authority to conscience, we are occasionally faced by the conscientious objector. If we ask for the reasons of the divergent judgments on such propositions as these, a clamour of conflicting cries arises immediately :—

(1) Some will say that the prohibition of murder rests upon the sixth commandment, and then the question will be asked, What of the massacre of the Amalekites, ordered, according to 1 Sam. 15, by God Himself ? Does the difference between right killing and wrong killing depend upon divine order and nothing else ? and, if so, is there no real final right and wrong in the matter ? Does the sin of murder depend upon the fact that God has happened, if we may use such an expression, to have forbidden it ? Or is there some inherent essential wrong in it ? And, if that is so, what are we to say about the Amalekites ?

(2) There is no clear and direct prohibition of gambling or the consumption of alcoholic drinks in the Bible. There is prohibition of various forms of dishonesty and of drunkenness. Both gambling and intemperance produce disastrous results. But on what grounds are we to say that gambling which does no harm and moderate drinking are wrong ? On this question there is profound

difference of opinion, among persons whom every one must admit to be conscientious. In the most highly civilized nations, it is possible to say, if you justify murder—even on political grounds—you may have plausible arguments, but your conclusion is wrong. Can this be said of threepenny whist or the pint of beer at dinner and supper? The U.S.A. apparently does say this of the latter but not, at present, of the former. I doubt whether any one else can seriously maintain this.

(3) There is no doubt that war is an unspeakable evil, and that when the Kingdom of God comes, there will be no such thing. But before the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ, is it true that war, with all its horrors, is the worst thing there is? Are pain and privation and death the worst of all evils? Is it better to avoid these at all costs,—at the cost, for instance, of allowing injustice and tyranny to triumph?

(4) It is true that a man must follow his conscience when he is clear as to its leading. But is the conscience incapable of perversion? When S. Paul persecuted the Church of Christ was he not completely satisfied, in his conscience, that he was doing what he ought? Can we be sure that the authorities of the Spanish Inquisition, or the New England Puritans were acting in defiance of their conscience when they persecuted those who differed from them? May not conscientious conviction be a cloak for self-will and intolerance? May not a conscientious conviction be wrong in fact? Is there no responsibility upon the individual for judging rightly, and preventing

the conscience identifying itself with what is wrong? S. Paul says (1 Cor. iv. 4) : “ I have nothing on my conscience (*οὐδὲν σὺνοῖδα ἔμαντῶ*), but I am not hereby justified.”

It is obvious that all such propositions as this, and the various opinions to which they give rise involve a very serious problem. The whole function of the moral law or the moral ideal is to regulate conduct—to guide man's choice towards the good and to deter him from wrong doing. This is, it would seem, a field in which certainty is highly desirable. Yet the illustrations I have chosen,—all of them matters of public discussion at various times and places, leave wide room for uncertainty. It is not certain, for instance, even if, for the moment, we assume that all the five propositions are true—*why* they are so. It is, of course, clear that no community could survive or reach a high level of civilization if private murder were not forbidden. But this does not prove that, if this untoward result were suspended or unlikely to come about in a particular case, an attractive and useful murder must be forbidden. Mere utility is no basis for a final morality : it produces rules of thumb and settles no real issues. In one or two of the other cases, it might easily be argued that in the general interest of the State it might be well to forbid gambling or alcoholic drinks ; but it might easily be contended as against this that the restriction of liberty involved in such legislation is not justifiable. There is here, not an absolute rule, but a balance of advantage, which may be differently estimated.



At times we obey laws imposed by the State, simply as such, because in certain conditions a rule of some sort has to be imposed in order to avoid confusion. The State fixes, for instance, the day of the year on which taxes must be paid ; there is no real value in the date, but some date must be fixed, and the neglect of it means more than mere carelessness ; it is a real breach of social order, that is, constructively a moral delinquency.

Perhaps the most helpful idea in straightening out all these difficulties is that of growth or evolution. We all know how human life has moved from barbarism to the condition which we call civilized, and how profoundly moral ideas have been altered in the process. And this enables us to understand how actions which might have been approved at one stage,—which a conscientious man would have felt bound to perform—may come in time to receive moral condemnation. But this does not get us altogether out of our difficulty. It means, of course, that the moral ideal is not a stable thing, the authority of which we can safely invoke at any time ; because the very courses which the highest conscience of one age may commend, may be forbidden in the next. This difficulty is more acute when the authority of God is involved. We might, for instance, say of the Amalekite massacre, “ The Jews were in a very barbarous condition ; they did things like other peoples at that stage, which they grew out of in the course of their evolution ; ” but in this case (according to I Sam.) the destruction was ordered by God, and Saul was punished for his failure to carry out the order. What are we to say

of this? Was the order given because the people were at the level at which they would understand it, and could not have grasped a higher type of duty? And if so, does not that introduce a dangerous principle? Is it not like the *γενναῖον φεῦδος* which Plato recommends? (Rep. 414), Or were they mistaken in thinking that God ever meant such an order, and was Samuel wrong in his interpretation of God's will?

### III.

These are very serious questions, and they lead on at once to the third main sphere of human interest, namely Religion. Here we have many of the previous difficulties repeated, for religion, as we know it, covers in itself some of the most difficult of the other elements of our experience. For instance, it implies a particular view of the world as a physical system. Those who investigate the mere facts of experience are at liberty, if they think proper, to adopt what we call a materialistic view of the world. They are primarily and mainly interested, as I have already pointed out, with the sequences in the world of experience: they are not necessarily bound to ask whom did the whole system come from, or what is its purpose? But when we take over a belief in a God, the whole aspect of the world becomes changed. We cannot any longer be satisfied with a bare materialism, we have to combine our faith in God with the observed order of the world as best we can. This will involve much metaphysical discussion, and we cannot deny that this is apt to be inconclusive. But this is not all. We shall have to enquire what is the nature of the God in whom we have

come to believe, and how far our moral instincts and ideals are confirmed by Him. We have already seen that this is not an easy question to answer. So far religion appears in close connexion with other lines of thought and speculation : it is connected with the metaphysical interpretation of experience and the moral order in the world. And so far our conclusions upon it are liable to the same hesitation and uncertainty as beset the other lines of thought. We believe that the world proceeded from the will of a Creator, and that this Creator is on the side of virtue. But we cannot, I think, at this stage say more than that our observations of the world seem to point us to these conclusions : we cannot say we have demonstrated them, or express much surprise if other minds arrive at different conclusions. We may say, I think, that the case for our conclusion is a very strong one, and we may point to many serious difficulties to which the opposite view is exposed ; but I think we cannot go further on these lines.

But religion, as we know it, that is the Christian religion, affects the whole situation in a profoundly important way. It asserts that God has actually entered upon the field of history, and taken definite action at a certain time and place. Moreover, the action, thus alleged to have taken place, solves decisively some of the questions previously left uncertain. It settles for good and all the problem whether God has made the world and has an interest in it ; it settles for good the question whether He is on the side of righteousness ; it deals in a very unexpected but conclusive way with the question of evil,

and draws into something like a coherent system the very perplexing record of human efforts and failures and hopes. I think that nothing less than this can be truly said of the claims of Christianity. We must now consider the bearing of all this upon the subject of this Lecture.

A short time ago, I pointed out that historical statements have this peculiarity that they are not susceptible of demonstrative proof, but must depend upon the witness of those who had direct knowledge of their truth. This, of course, is to many minds a great disadvantage: it seems to leave an air of precariousness over the whole matter. Witnesses we all know are deceived sometimes, and sometimes untrustworthy. Would it not have been better to set Christianity going in the world with some absolutely unassailable philosophical proof, so that no one in his senses could possibly have disputed its truth? For many reasons (into which I cannot enter now) I think this involves a complete misconception of the nature of religion, and the religious relation between man and God. But the tendency to argue in this way is a very strong one, from the days of the Gnostics until now; we are exhorted now to give up insisting on the facts of the history of our Lord and confine ourselves to promulgating the lofty ideas which the history embodied as in a parable. I am convinced that this is a wrong proposal. Theology takes a step downwards when it turns itself into a mere philosophy and ethical system; it cuts its true ground from under its own feet.

In spite, therefore, of the weight of opinion upon the other side, I think we shall do best to go back to and

base ourselves upon the witness of the Apostles. And this, as you will see at once, means the authority of the Apostles. All historical belief, as I pointed out, depends upon the authority of someone, and this principle of authority is, I think, rooted in Christianity. But the authority of the Apostles is not bare, isolated authority. They tell us that certain things happened, and if they are right, these events are a verification of hopes which we could never fully justify : they open out to us a view of the whole course of God's Providence. We do not demonstrate the truth of the facts by speculating upon God's Providence, but if they occurred they let us see what God's method and purpose are.

I venture to put this forward as a general statement of the relation of the Christian faith to various lines of speculation current at the present time. I must now deal with some of the problems which arise within the circle of the Christian faith itself, and I am afraid I can only deal with them, in the time at my disposal, in a very summary way. Perhaps we may put our question in the simple form : What is the function of authority within the living Church, and in what form should it be expressed ?

Let us recall for a moment what the task of the Church actually is. It has to proclaim a certain body of truth, and it has to present a certain type of life. Both these are governed by the new knowledge of God which came from the life of Christ. From the time of S. Paul truth and practice were inextricably intertwined. "If Christ hath not been raised," he says to the Corinthians, "your

faith is in vain, ye are yet in your sins " (1 Cor. xv. 17), or, again, " We were buried with him by means of baptism unto death, that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life " (Rom. vi). The Church has never set aside this two-fold function ; nor, I think, could it do so without breaking for good its link with the Apostles and our Lord. We very reasonably expect, therefore, to find and we do find that there is authoritative doctrine and authoritative rules of life. In the course of history, both the doctrine and the rule of life have to compete with philosophical theories and ethical systems. The philosopher will try to force into the mould of his theories the facts upon which Christianity is based ; he will find difficulties in them and offer new constructions of them which will attract the attention of his own following. The political moralist will say that he too means well and has at heart the progress of the race, and that the Christian code is unpractical : Why should he be forced to correspond with the Christian code as it is stated by S. Paul or other representative Christians ? There will be much talking one way and another, and the question will always remain,—What is to be done ? How is the controversy to be brought to an end ?

Now the simplest method of dealing with all these difficulties is to find some decisive authority which will obviate the necessity of any individual thinking. Such an authority will, for instance, undertake to settle all questions whatever ; it will say, for instance, This that and the other book must not be read ; this is the un-

changing form of the faith ; this that and the other custom must prevail over the whole Church ; this that and the other custom must be forbidden. Such a method is very convenient, because it enables everyone to throw his responsibility upon some other shoulders, and avoid all positive decisions. There are at the present moment two authorities claiming universal validity : there is the Pope and there is the letter of Holy Scripture. As I have said, either of them will save much trouble for those who satisfy themselves with them, because it is always easier to refer any difficulty to some final authority than to think the problem out for oneself. But they work in different ways. The authority of the Pope claims the right to extend at any rate the definition of doctrines already received, to make explicit what has been implicit, and to meet new situations. Those who appeal to the letter of Scripture are inclined to use it in a restrictive direction. They would assert the binding force of all that is definitely there, but they would also reject all that is not there.

For various reasons, I venture to think that neither of these finally gives satisfaction. The claims of the Pope are involved in all kinds of disputes in the regions of history and Church law and exegesis. There is considerable uncertainty as to the tests of a decree *ex cathedra* and the conditions in which such a power may be expected to be exercised. On the other hand, the appeal to Scripture on which great emphasis was laid at the time of the Reformation, would seem to need considerable re-statement in the light of modern criticism. However distressing it may be to many devout people

in our modern Church, it cannot be denied that a change has come upon the very idea of the Bible and its inspiration, and therefore the direct appeal to Holy Scripture is less clear than it was. This does not necessarily modify the unique position of Holy Scripture which indeed all Christians recognize, but it does mean that in interpreting it we must take account of the conditions both of the writers and the Christian society in which the books were written, and recognize within the Holy Scripture many grades of inspiration.

I venture to raise the question whether we are looking in the right direction for authority, and whether we have the right ideal of authority as such. In the earlier part of this lecture we noticed how very hard it is to find an authority which is unassailable. We saw the value of authority in education, its importance in history, but we saw clearly that even in such a grave matter as morality itself we have to take into consideration historic circumstances, development in ideas, and the like. Does not all this suggest that the search for an infallible determination, independent of circumstances and current ideas may be delusive? The deliverances of an authority as such do not convey the real reason why they are made. I accept, as I pointed out, the statements of the scientific expert, but I do so because I think he knows the real reason; and, if I were sufficiently trained, could make me see it. May it not be that in the Church we are mistaken in looking for an authority which will settle decisively any question that may arise, and thereby save us from thought and meditation? I think this is so;



we have conceived the notion of authority too narrowly and abstractly. But you will ask me, "What, then, is your theory of religious truth?" I will endeavour to answer this question briefly.

The Church is a living body, informed and quickened by the Holy Spirit of God. To the Church, inspired by the Holy Spirit, a message has been entrusted, consisting of a body of truth and a pattern of life, which it has, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to pass on to each age. There are no intellectual or moral questions which its message cannot meet, but its duty of applying and interpreting its message is never done. It has a message, and its terms are therefore limited, but the range of human speculation—as the history of philosophy plainly shows—is limited also; the questions which man asks as to his life and environment are of a limited number of recurrent types. The broken unity of the Church increases the difficulty of interpreting the message to the world, but does not render the task impossible. We have learnt from the past the unwisdom of endeavouring to deal with new questions by authoritative condemnations: they are surely signs of deficient faith in the competence of the Holy Spirit, our guide, for all circumstances. We have learnt from the past how to approach and deal with questions as they arise; and we are united with the men of old, because the one Spirit is with us as with them. We shall not neglect what our predecessors did, but the Spirit would be gradually stifled if we regard the past as a storehouse of rigid precedents, to be applied mechanically for ever, under the form of authority. No doubt

there will be times when it will be hard to say what the answer is to pressing questions : it is then that we shall desire some infallible authority ; we shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and we shall not see it. Our Lord never promised that the Comforter, when He comes, will deliver us from all perplexity. He did promise that He will lead us into all the truth. So far as we can infer the future from the past, we shall expect that the Holy Spirit will not dissociate us from all human thought and speculation, but He will guide us through its tangles, and show us how to place our message again and again in relation with the ages as they come. Our Lord says, " He shall take of that which is mine and declare it unto you." He will cause no breach with the story of the life and death of Christ. He will shew us more and more of what we mean when we say, " God so loved the world that He sent His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."



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